

A Day in the Life of a Turkish Village Woman

Ali Riza Balaman*

She has to wake up before dawn. First of all she prepares the dough for the daily bread which takes at least two hours. In the meantime, she makes the fire and puts the cooker on it for morning soup. She goes down to the barn to take the morning milk from the sheep and cows. Before she goes she wakes up one child to help her by holding the animal's head while she milks. After milking she goes quickly to the spring to bring back fresh water, and she distributes portions of water to several places — some for the toilet, some in an earthenware jug for drinking, and some in the long spouted copper kettle near the fire which will be warmed for personal hygiene. She takes the soup away from the fire and puts the milk on the fire to cook for making yogurt. After the milk boils, she starts to cook the bread. She puts the storder in the

* Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

dough to make it ready to be cooked and wakes her husbands and children. The family enjoys the morning soup together with the fresh breads.

She must finish her soup before the others so she has time to fold the beds and put them on the wall in their proper place for daytime. She washes up the dishes and bids farewell to her husband who leaves for work, providing him with his lunch box. Then, with her children, she must separate the livestock for the different shepherds because cow goes to crowd; sheep goes to flock. Meanwhile, she cleans the barn and makes some dried dung bricks which will be used for fuel in winter time by mixing some straw in with the cattle manure.

Now she is ready to make butter from the yogurt which was prepared the night before from the evening's milk. She puts all the yogurt into a special case, some of them made of wood; some of them made of sheep's skin, and starts to shake it hard until it becomes butter. She places the butter into its own container and puts the remainder ("ayran") into a sack to make fatless cheese later. She feeds the chickens and lets them go out. After that she sends her sons to the mountain with their lunch box to bring back wood and dried bushes, and takes her daughter with her to the nearest field, where they grow some vegetables. They work there until noon, when she returns home to clean the house. It is just time to start cooking the evening meal. The dinner meal should be a proper one.

Before the sun sets, all the sheep and cattle return home. If some are lost on the way back, they have to go out and find them before the evening dark comes. Now it is time to take the chickens in from outside, one by one. In the meantime, her husband returns from his heavy work and needs help unloading the oxcart. The wife puts the ox

in the barn with their feed. When the ox is in the barn, she takes the evening milk from the cows and sheep. All the milk has to boil for just the right amount of time to make yogurt, which will be used to make the butter and cheese.

After dinner is finished, she cleans the dishes and the children get ready for sleep, so she must prepare the beds for them as quickly as possible. While sleeping, she stitches their old clothes, because they have no spare clothes. She checks the animals one last time, and then she prays. She has finally earned the right to sleep. She will tell you that nothing, not even an exploding bomb, can awaken her from her slumber, but when the pregnant sheep down in the barn start to give birth she is ready to wake up and help with delivery.

She does all these jobs with her children's help. "Life is so hard in the village without children", she says.

Conclusion

This is one side of the life style of Turkish people. One cannot generalize about all Turkish people. One can, of course, find places which have been highly developed, especially in the tourist areas: the west and southwest parts of Turkey's coasts and the large cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Turkey is a part of Europe and has four proper seasons and nice coastline for sunbathing. High quality accommodations are available, which accounts for the five million tourists we have yearly.

My intention is not to illustrate Turkish poverty, but rather to show part of Turkey's reality. In my opinion, the condition of the peasantry

is the major dilemma of Turkey, especially when considering the disparity between the urban and rural populations. One should keep in mind that there are more than 35,000 villages, which comprise nearly half of the nation's population.

As we can see, rural life in Turkey has no sex discrimination in work. It means that women can do as men do, and men can do as women do, because they have no alternative. Every new born baby is potential man-power in that kind of life style, and that is why the government has such difficult in implementing effective birth control policies.

They live under the same roof as the animals, animals on the ground floor and people on the floor above them. It is not only to take advantage of the animals' body heat, but also to allow the family to take better care of the animals. All the various kinds of animals are an important part of their life.

The Turkish woman's status in rural life has been determined by man because of the patriarchal family system, and this reality dictates that the woman's work performance is significantly harder than man's. In this context, woman can be beaten by man; can be divorced by man; and can share the same jobs as man. Man says to his wife:

"The world is large, like a boiling kettle
Which has four holders.
You must hold two of them, and I will hold the others
In order not to allow it to turn over."